



Mossland closeup, 2022



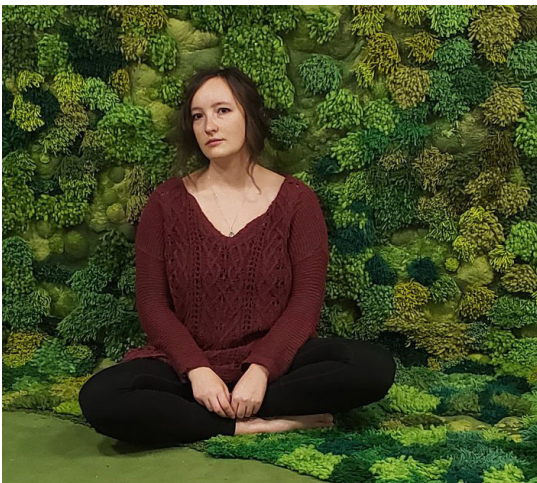
Portfolio
Mallory Zondag

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Mallory Zondag is a Mixed Media Fiber artist and artist educator. Her work explores our tenuous relationship with the continuous growth and decay of the natural world and humanity's place within those cycles using hand felted wool, wax, fibers, fabrics and objects both found and recycled. Our collective fascination and repulsion towards natural processes, from blooming flowers to blooming molds, pushes her to sculpt moments of grotesque beauty, investigating this duality through the meditative and hands-on practices of wet felting, weaving, sculpting and stitching.

Her work has been exhibited in both solo and group shows nationally and internationally. She has been an Artist In Residence at Acadia National Park, The Allentown Art Museum, The Wassaic Project



Mallory Zondag

and many schools and community organizations. During many of these residencies she has led community art programs where felted wool living walls are collaboratively created with students of all ages and abilities. She was commissioned to create the sensory space for Artsquest's Accessible Arts program and was commissioned to recreate a component of one of Amalia Mesa-Bains's installations for her retrospective at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.

Could you tell us about how you are inspired by nature?

It feels like a calling, I am endlessly fascinated by the natural world. The forms and patterns, the process of growth and decay, the way light can paint the same view in endless variations. I always say that nature is the greatest artist and that the pieces I create are ways of replicating and interpreting the visual and tactile motifs of the natural world to tell human narratives. Stories about how we interact with the natural world, about relationships, connections, social systems and any other idea or story I'm compelled to tell.

It feels easy to forget in the time we live in that we are not separate from nature, no matter how much we have tried to make



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it so. Our bodies themselves are organic, we contain internal ecosystems, we are effected by light and air and our environment same as all other living beings from trees to microbes to whales. To live in a time that seems to be the peak of our separation from nature, our intrinsic and inextricable connection to it is a fact and an idea I feel I will explore through my art, almost as a scientist conducting research, for the rest of my life.

Who/what inspires you creatively? What do you 'feed' on the most?

There are two things I find always grab my attention and get me excited about creating art. One is physical and one is scientific research. The first is simply texture, of all sorts, the intricacy of pin cushion mosses, the sculptural forms of oyster mushrooms, the undulating smooth surfaces of exposed tree roots on hiking trails, I could go on and on. I am constantly taking photos of textures I see every day from a bit of moss in a sidewalk crack to map lichens on grave-stones, hollowed out tree stumps given over to shelf fungi, it is constant inspiration. They lead me to the forms I create through wet felting, the patterns I stitch and the textures I latch hook. My other source of deep inspiration and excitement is natural systems,

the ways in which nature is endlessly interconnected and how that extends to human beings whether we like it or not. The research by Suzanne Simard revealing the undeniable connections within forests through mycorrhizal fungal networks, shifting our understanding of trees from individual organisms to members of a connected network will never stop inspiring me, for what it says about nature and parallels we can and should be drawing with human nature and survival on this planet. It is through interconnection that we all thrive.

What are you working on right now? Any exciting projects you can tell us about?

I just finished a new body of work called "Connective Fibers". It is a series of large scale sculptures made primarily through wet felting that use both visceral and organic forms to tell a personal narrative about the ending of an emotionally abusive relationship. The sculptures were made possible by a grant received through the Statewide Community Regrants program of New York. Now that those pieces are finished I will be leading a few community art programs that I created called "Fiber Living Wall" where I work in schools, elementary through high school, to teach the students wet felting.



Connective Tissue closeup, 2022

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Scar Tissue closeup, 2023

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They create felted leaves, flowers, rocks and mushrooms and at the end I take all of their work and stitch it together into a cohesive sculpture, representing a tiny ecosystem that then hangs permanently in the school. I'll also be working on a piece inspired by my time as resident artist at Acadia National Park, felting and latch hooking the many mosses and lichens that carpet the forest floor and rock faces and very literally help build the forest by creating soil and providing beds of moisture to support sapling growth.

What is the last book you enjoyed?

Utopia Avenue by David Mitchell. He is one of my favorite authors because when I read his work I feel like a hand comes out of the book and pulls me directly into the world of the story. This is his newest book and I couldn't bear to put it down.

What is your favourite motto or quotation?

"Hello tiny creature, made of star compost."
It is a line from a David Mitchell novel, *Ghostwritten*. I read it last year and it has just stuck with me for illustrating one of the biggest ideas in the simplest of sentences. We are small within the universe, one tiny piece in the infinite organic machine, we are

made of star compost. That idea, similar to Carl Sagan's *Pale Blue Dot*, says to me live your life as best you can because existing in itself is miraculous, live with the best intentions, love, explore, create, but don't take yourself too seriously, don't take our planet for granted, check your ego and how you interact with the world because you are a tiny creature made of nothing more than star compost, both miraculous and insignificant.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

The ideal balance between connection and solitude, contentment and excitement. I don't think it can ever be just one thing, it's all the things I love in balance. Connections with friends and family and community fill me with joy but time in solitude also brings me peace, time to create and to relax. I love to feel cozy and content with coffee and some stitching project or a good book but I also love the feeling of adventure, of travelling, have new experiences and being out in nature. It is finding the ideal balance between all of these things in my life that makes me the happiest.

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If not an artist, who/what would you be?

I don't think I could be anything else in this life, I am undeniably pulled to creating and to thinking and communicating through tactile sculpture but if I didn't have that pull to create I think I would like to be a scientist. The way my mind works I don't think I'm cut out for scientific research but if I was, with everything I'm inspired by as an artist, the ideas I'm fascinated with, researching mycelium or mosses, coral reefs or forests or anything about the natural world would be my dream job in this alternate universe. ×

For more of Mallory's work: <https://www.mallorymakes.com/art>



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Parasite, 2023



Primavera, 2022

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